

# Community

## Back to school: Helping children transition

**A** Starting school for the first time and returning back to school can be exciting times for many families. Taking the bus, being back with friends, meeting new teachers and classmates, studying, playing sports — these exhilarating adventures also may make our children anxious. If you notice your child is having a tougher time transitioning back to school, you may consider scheduling time with a play therapist.

Barbara Wollman is a licensed clinical social worker at Squirrel Hill Psychological Services of Jewish Family & Children's Service and one of the few registered play therapy supervisors in the Pittsburgh region. Often you'll find Wollman popping popcorn, catching a ball, drawing pictures and "playing" with puppets — whatever it takes to provide a safe place for her young clients to work through anxiety, confusion, anger, grief or any other common emotions.

"In the normal, day-to-day world children constantly must adapt and adjust to changes — a new sibling, new school, even a different snack or someone else picking them up," says Wollman. "Add to this families dealing with divorce, remarriage, death or other unexpected life changes, and you have many instances where children simply are overwhelmed and unable to cope alone. They may become sad or withdrawn. They may become belligerent and act out."

Whether it's back to school time or other lifecycle transitions and crises, appropriate interventions like play therapy can help children and adolescents work through whatever issues overwhelm them and, with the help of a therapist like Wollman, find resilience and inner resources to develop better coping skills.

To learn how Squirrel Hill Psychological Services can help your child, teenager, you as a parent or other members of your family, call (412) 521-3800 for a confidential consultation or visit [squirrelhillpsych.org](http://squirrelhillpsych.org). Whatever the issue, therapists at Squirrel Hill Psychological Services are committed to providing sensitive and confidential work and helping individuals and families make positive changes in their lives.



Barbara Wollman

Jewish Family & Children's Service photo

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